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THE GRASSHOPPER.

Editor Colorado Farmer:

DEAR SIR: Upon my arrival in Denver, three weeks ago, you request me to furnish you with a brief account of my ir. endemic observations in Colorado, before my departure. I can find time for but a few hurried jottings.

OBJECT OF VISIT.

As you are already aware, my visit has been in furtherance of the work of the United States Entomological Commission, and my investigations have had reference to the Rocky Mountain locust or grasshopper. It gives me great pleasure to state that a whom I have met with in Colorado, from the State of Ohio, to the humblest farmer, have been generous in my efforts, and express a hearty sympathy with the work of the commission, in passing contrast to the prejudgment and criticism that have emanated from one or two sources.

After visiting Greeley, Golden, Boulder, and other points north of Denver, and some of the ranches lying along the Denver and Rio Grande railway, I found very little that was instructive beyond what intelligent correspondents had already communicated. Hence, I went as much times as possible to the mountain passes and ridges, especially those within easy reach of the narrow-gauge road, a ready mention to the officers of which I am under special obligations for liberal aid. Mr. Wm. H. H. of the North, has on behalf of the commission, visited most of the interesting points which have had no time to reach in "back" Lake, Gunnison, Fremont, Sugarloaf, San Juan, Rio Grande, Conejos and Costilla Counties.

PERIOD OF VISIT.

In all the States to the east invaded last year, the eggs of the locust were laid very thickly, and the gravest apprehensions as to injury excited as spring opened. Nor were these without warrant. Notwithstanding those eggs which were destroyed during the winter by crickets, and those which prematurely hatched in the fall and during the mild weather of February, enough had hatched in April to cause great consternation. Throughout the invaded country lying east of Colorado already visited by the commission, which includes a large States affected from Texas to Minnesota, the insects have disappeared without, in general way, doing any serious injury. What with the increased number and efficiency of birds and other enemies, the more exterminated efforts made and improved methods of warfare employed against them by farmers, the heavy cold and continued rains that followed the gradual melting, and the greater elation and tendency to disease among them, everywhere noticeable, the young insects rapidly increased in numbers, and those which survived to acquire wings, rose and flew to the northwest in scattering swarms. Even in Northwest Iowa and Southwest Minnesota, where the injury was greatest, the insects have not remained to do serious damage. In the past year, they continued to do off and finally left, or are now leaving, after doing more or less injury.

I have been much interested in finding how thoroughly the conclusions already described have prevailed over all parts of Colorado, having at a height of 7,000 feet above the sea level. There were more eggs laid in Colorado last fall than during any year that those who have conversed with me remember. The principal hatching of April was followed by continued cold rains and snows which would partially destroy the day and freeze again at night, so that the young insects were alternately submerged in the snow and frosted. In early summer there was by far the largest amount of rainfall known for many years in the State. The insects were weak and died and disappeared. They were abundantly serviceable in destroying them, and the little gray, gregarious species described to me as being abundant and efficient in February, and which is, perhaps, the horned short-horned *Scaphium alpestris*, I have not noticed to the east. The species will be definitely determined in due time. Very much of the same condition of things occurred all over the State, below the altitude of 5,000 feet, whether in the northern part or along the eastern base of the Sangre de Cristo, and in the Chinleas valley, where the insects attacked more thickly.

Two years have seen more favorable to the Colorado farmer. I have noticed a number of poor wheat crops resulting from defective irrigation or other causes, but the average yield will, I think, be from twenty to twenty-five bushels to the acre. A good crop of rye was so abundant that it had to be prematurely cut, and used for hay. Barley has yielded from twenty-five to thirty bushels per acre, and the yield of oats will be fair. Corn looks well, and stock of all kinds in excellent condition. In Lake County, where there is an extensive area under cultivation along the Arkansas, and where the damage was great last year, few locusts hatched the present year. In Park County, mostly devoted to grazing, the injury has been very slight.

The San Luis Valley, which is devoted to agriculture and stock raising, has suffered little, and the beautiful Valley has as usual a very fine case, been singularly free. In the West, Mountain Valley, which is specially subject to injury, the farmers had to fight early in the season; and the injury in the valley of the Costilla, where fields were cleared out by the young locusts, was greater than in any other part of the State. The severe injury, extended southward into New Mexico, where the valley of the Rio Grande was swept clean. Yet, on the opposite side of the mountain, the president of the New Mexico Stock and Agriculture Association reports no injury, the young insects having disappeared.

CONDITIONS IN THE PARKS AND PASSES ABOVE THE ALTITUDE OF 7,000 FEET.

While in the lower plains and valley regions of the State the conditions have been so similar, a those which prevail toward the Mississippi, they have been quite different in the higher plateaus and peaks. At altitudes of from 8,000 to 9,000 feet above the sea, the principal hatching occurred in May, and was in proportion as we ascend, until

in the passes with an altitude of 12,000 or 13,000 feet the insects are yet hatching. At such great heights the mature locusts are often to be found in large quantities under stones and other shelter, which they sought as a winter and premature overwintering by winter; and their young are hatching out in great numbers. As no agriculture is carried on in these passes and passes, no effort is made to destroy the insects.

THE LOCUST PROBLEM MORE COMPLICATED IN COLORADO THAN IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

It is in consequence of the above facts that the locust question becomes so complicated in your State. Colorado combines within its limits the meteorological and climatic features of a dozen States. In the Mississippi Valley country there are laws governing the invasion from the northwest, and the return migrations in summer, on which to predicate with to create assurance. This is more particularly true south of the 42nd parallel. Your most disastrous swarms so come from the north and northwest, and the insects which hatch out on your plains east of the mountains are largely governed by the same laws and instincts as those which hatch to the east. On acquiring wings they leave, and those that rise before the second week in July will bear to the north and northwest. This is more particularly true south of the 42nd parallel. After the middle of July the rains increase, and the winds are more variable, prevail, so far as I have yet ascertained, gently from east or south in the morning, but stronger from west or northwest in the afternoon. Swarms are liable, therefore, at a most any time after the middle of July, to swoop down from the passes and plateaus west of the range, upon the valleys and plains to the east. These swarms remain within your borders, or, if they pass beyond, bear southward to Texas. From what I have seen, the commission so far possesses, it becomes more and more plain that I have been correct in considering the species as a subalpine, and in locating the breeding grounds of the more disastrous swarms, in that of last year, in the plains regions of the extreme northwest, where the summers are short and the winters long.

I find the exodus of the winged insects from that portion of your State lying east of the mountains less complete than in Kansas and Missouri for instance, and of the earlier mature individuals that have not left, some commenced ovipositing a week or so since. The young from eggs laid thus early will be maturely hatched this summer or fall, and inevitably perish, just as those now hatching toward the snow line will perish before attaining maturity. The insect is single-celled, and the tendency to the two great swarms of the summer is too long as is fatal to the generation of the species as the want of time to properly mature a single generation where the summers are too short. Both extremes obtain within the limits of your State, as also the intermediate conditions in which the species can thrive permanently; whereas in no part of the Mississippi Valley south of the 42nd parallel, and probably some degrees further north, can the species find its own continuous, and, with few exceptions, it seldom remains a single year. In other words, you have in your territory the very conditions which prevail in the plains region of the Saskatchewan and Red river countries, where the species is most at home.

PROSPECTIVE.

While the record of Colorado up to this time is so interesting, in comparison with that of other States, the probabilities during the rest of the season more deeply interest. "What are the prospects?" This is the question put to me on every hand. The farmer who is just about harvesting his wheat, is anxious to know whether the chances are that it will be successfully ruined by the winged pests, as it has been in years past, or that it will be unmoested.

From what I have said above, it follows that I cannot predicate with the same assurance that I have come from Texas, Missouri, Kansas and Iowa; but, to be brief, the prospects are, in my opinion, quite favorable. Writing to Governor Newberry, five weeks since, as to the prospects of Iowa, remarked:

There is some apprehension from swarms from the south, and from fresh flights later in the season from the northwest. I think there is little danger of either. The return swarms in summer from the country south are never very disastrous. The insects have been flying north and northwest for about six weeks, but so scattered that, as I anticipated five weeks ago, no serious injury has followed their settling. They fly mostly west of Iowa, and when they do injury it is generally near the British American line. That there will be no fresh visitation of a widespread character later in the year from the northwest there is every reason to hope. The native breeding grounds must have been measurably depleted last year, and the migration has been so far and doubtless will be slight. This reasoning applies to the section of your State which I have visited. It will apply to all the country south and east of the 42nd parallel and north of the Missouri, but will hold less and less true as we go north and west of those limits. Altogether the outlook is favorable. From excessive wet and for other reasons, the ordinary grain pests, like the chinch bug, will be harmless, and with favorable weather, therefore, there is every reason to feel encouraged.

Much of this reasoning will apply also to Colorado, and it is strengthened and confirmed by what has occurred since. Dr. Packard, of the commission, who has been through Utah, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, confirms my conclusion that the northwest must be measurably depleted, for he could not find a locust in Montana from the Canadian line up to Fort Benton, or down the Missouri to Bismarck. None are to be seen in the region south of South Saskatchewan, and there is an immense area free from them in their native country. There is very little danger, then, of a swarms from the north, and if they come from the Black Hills country, there remains the chance of swarms from your own western passes and plateaus, or those from Utah. But I have good reasons for believing that they will prove no more injurious than the swarms which have been passing on several occasions I have seen in your State from the west, and which have been passing on several occasions I have seen in your State from the west, and which have been passing on several occasions I have seen in your State from the west.

and has been so numerous for the past three or four years that its enemies have rioted in plenty, and at last, in their turn, have increased inordinate. In your parasitic tachinids known to produce the parasitic maggots known to infest the locust, are so numerous as to produce a constant buzzing like a swarm of bees, and to prove a positive nuisance to tourists. Every winged locust that attempts to fly is pursued by three or four of them, and the locusts that are daily rising from said passes whenever the breeze is favorable, are very generally parasitized and diseased in consequence. The same locusts, true, as I learn from reports in Utah, and as the parasites will increase as the season advances, there is no reason to believe that the later swarms from the west of you will prove more injurious than those that have a ready exit, the same will also apply to locusts of those which leave the Black Hills country, though I have less positive information from that region. Nature maintains her average in the long run, and a few seasons of locust and locust ravages are apt to be followed by a period of more rainy seasons and locust decrease.

REMEDIES.

As these have been quite fully given in the commission's bulletins, and are not particularly new or at this season, I will dismiss the subject with the remark that I have found no means employed in Colorado that are not employed in other States, except as your irrigating ditches permit of a peculiar and satisfactory use of coal oil. Should, perhaps, except one means employed in the West Mountain valley, where, as the young insects pass from the edges and benches where they hatch, into the valley, they are so "cut" into a dust by overhanging the ground, that a pestilence from their dead bodies is sometimes threatened. I think your farmers are not sufficiently appreciative of the use of the city, which could often be used to advantage where other means fail.

CONCLUSION.

There are many parts of the State that have had no time yet to visit, and there are some interesting observations to be made, which can only be made after in the year. The commission meets at Chicago, on the 7th proximo, to compare notes and perfect plans for the fall. My next six weeks will be spent in British America, after which I hope to be able to return to a while to Colorado, which presents so interesting a field. Meanwhile Mr. F. O. and Mr. C. S. Weston, of Chicago, who will follow me, will make special notes of what transpires, and numerous correspondence will aid their observations. Mr. J. C. Shattuck, your Superintendent of Public Instruction, has kindly sent the commission documents to a county school officers, and in return their co-operation, and you may rest assured that no pains will be spared by the commission to ascertain all that is ascertainable in Colorado, as in every other State and territory interested. There are those who are vain enough to believe that they know a about this locust problem, and would find fault with the commission because it sends out circulars of inquiry all over the country. The commissioners consider their duty not only to disseminate information already possessed, but to gather from all parts of the country the facts peculiar to each section; for experience differs immensely with altitude and surroundings. The flights of the winged insects—their direction and the direction and force of the wind at the time, in Colorado the rest of the season, will be of great interest, and the commission will feel under obligations to any of your readers who will send me notes thereon.

C. V. RILEY.

Summit, LaVeta Pass, July 28, 1877.

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